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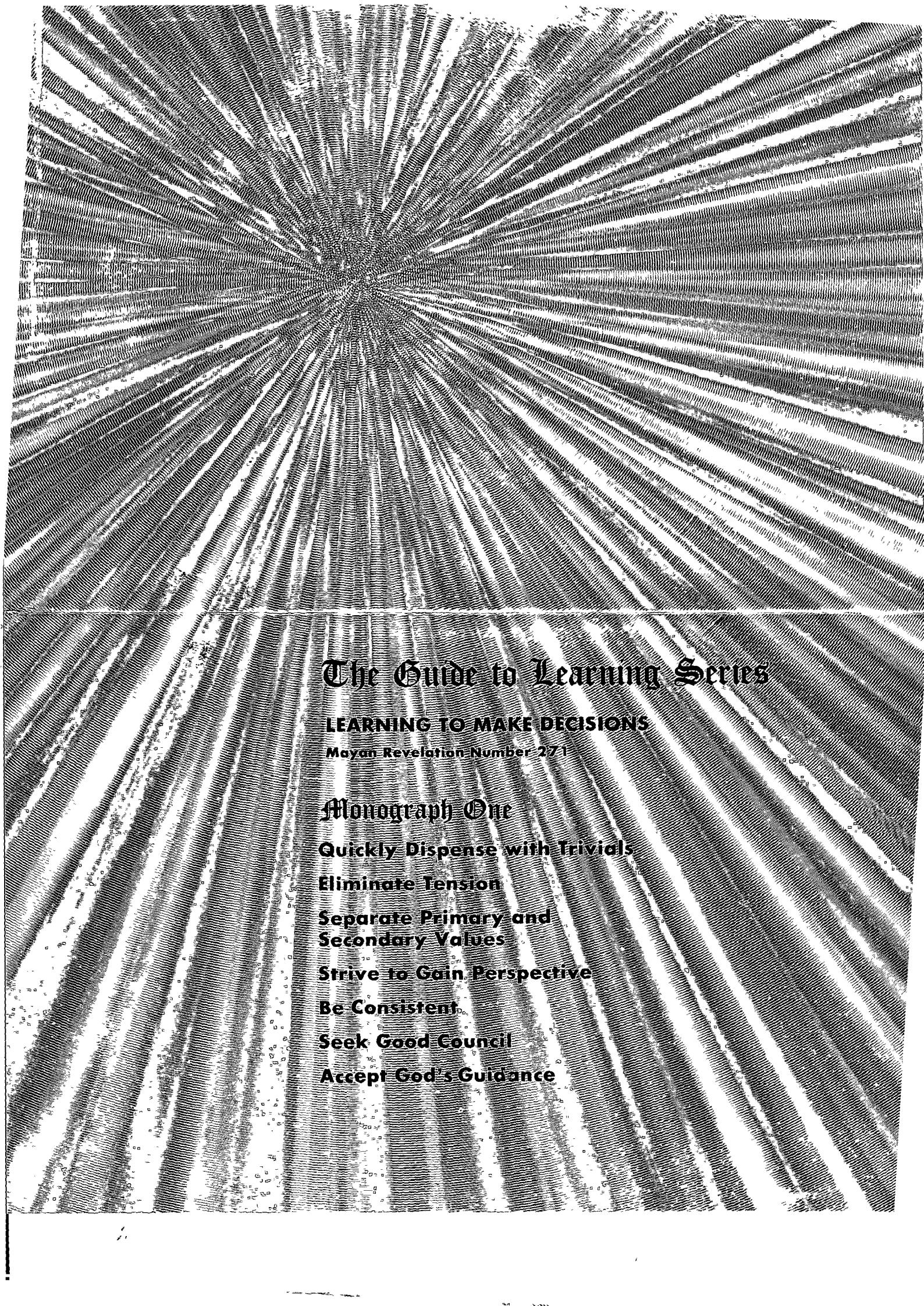
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The Guide to Learning Series

LEARNING TO MAKE DECISIONS

Mayan Revelation Number 271

Monograph One

Quickly Dispense with Trivials

Eliminate Tension

**Separate Primary and
Secondary Values**

Strive to Gain Perspective

Be Consistent

Seek Good Council

Accept God's Guidance



ELoved Perfector:

Your Instructor takes great pleasure in bringing this lesson to you, for it is the first in a Series of Eight Lessons entitled:

LEARNING TO MAKE DECISIONS
LEARNING TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS
LEARNING TO SALVAGE FRAGMENTS
LEARNING TO KEEP YOUR BALANCE

LEARNING TO FACE SUFFERING
LEARNING TO FACE DEATH
LEARNING THE VALUE OF DISCIPLINE
LEARNING TO SHIFT YOUR LOAD

Learning may be defined as the acquiring of Knowledge or skills - especially knowledge in a special field. In this Lesson and the seven to follow, as named above, you will read and learn of the most important qualities of life, and of how they can have a profound effect upon your life.

To a large extent, the manner in which we adjust to these qualities will determine whether our lives are to be rich - and full of the joy of life - or whether we must be content with a less satisfying way.

Your Instructor hopes that you will give your full attention to each Lesson in this new Series as it is presented, for all are parts of the greater scope, which is the Series itself.

And now, let us begin with "LEARNING TO MAKE DECISIONS":



You no doubt have faced occasions when it was difficult for you to make a decision. This caused you to waste valuable time and energy. By delay, you may have lost an opportunity to make the choice that would enrich your life.

If you spend a day endeavoring to decide whether or not to call a conference to straighten out a business tangle, much harm can be done while you are hesitating. When you ponder for hours over the advisability of a certain course of action, your mind is not free to deal with constructive thoughts. If you wait too long to decide whether or not you will grasp an opportunity that is offered, you may lose it forever.

Failure to immediately accept an invitation to dinner, or a social gathering, is sometimes considered a rebuff to proffered friendship. Extended deliberation as to whether to risk marriage may cause a man to lose the woman who could have made him happy. It may cause a woman to miss her opportunity for a home and family.

Of course important issues should receive a reasonable amount of consideration, but indecision frequently leads to inaction. It contributes to nervous exhaustion.

If you want to live triumphantly you must cultivate a frame of mind that will enable you to think clearly. Learn to weigh values, and then determine without delay which is the best course of action. Having done this, you will want to act upon your decision, wasting no worry on the possibility that you may have made the wrong choice. As you form the habit of promptly deciding what is best, you will find that you have more time and energy for the tasks you face.

This Lesson presents several principles that can aid you in making decisions. Study them carefully. Honestly strive to apply them day by day, whether the choice you must make relates to something of vital importance, or to something trivial. In matters large and small, learn to make decisions quickly, as well as intelligently. Let us approach this Lesson as we repeat the words of the following PRAYER:

Dear Father, we are confronted on every hand with doubt and uncertainty. Open our minds to Thy guidance and truth. Help us to avoid false choices. Save us from the drain of indecision. Help us to see what is best and to act upon it. May Thy wisdom be our Light each step of the way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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QUICKLY DISPENSE WITH TRIVIALS

Before considering the principles that will aid you in making important decisions, you will want to note the value of facing up to the choices that relate to insignificant things. It is a common error to give undue deliberation to trivial matters.

No doubt you have been annoyed in a restaurant when members of your party kept the waitress waiting because they could not decide what to order. When shopping you may have become weary when someone examined dozens of ties before finding one that satisfied him, or dallied over two garments, neither of which he had serious intention of purchasing.

Studiously avoid the habit of giving an unreasonable amount of consideration to decisions that are not vital. Make snap-judgments when the issue involved has little significance. If you make a mistake and later think you would prefer something else, resist the temptation to change your decision. Abide by the choice you have made, if it concerns trifles, and turn your attention to more important matters. This will help you to become a bigger person - to think more nobly and to live on a higher plane.

Each hour of your life is precious. Don't waste time on decisions that relate to matters which are really unimportant. Quickly dispense with trifles.

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ELIMINATE TENSION

When you must make more important decisions, first quiet your mind. As

you become relaxed and free of tension, you are better qualified to determine the right choice.

Perhaps you are asking: "But how can I eliminate tension?"

It will help you to relax if you realize that you are not expected to be infallible. Try not to take yourself too seriously, or to assume that in any situation all the responsibility rests upon you.

Resolve to search for every bit of light that can be thrown upon the subject before you, and to give the matter as much consideration as it deserves. Then be prepared to make a decision, aware that you are not expected to be right one hundred percent of the time, for you are human. This attitude will prevent undue wear and tear upon your nervous system. It will help you to develop a more stable personality.

Remind yourself that many decisions can be altered. Others can be re-examined at a future time. When you are traveling, if you take the wrong turn you go back to the fork in the road and pick up the right route. Frequently you can do this in life. At other times - when it is impossible to retrace false steps - if you keep calm and alert you will see other opportunities for advancement. Your future does not depend upon any one decision. Bear this in mind if you are inclined to tremble lest you make a false move.

Fear can blur your vision when you need to clearly see the issues before you. If you are afraid, you may hesitate too long. So approach any hour of decision with confidence in yourself, and with trust in God's leading. Have faith that you will gain insight to know what is right. When your mind is free of tension you can make decisions more quickly and with less chance of error.

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SEPARATE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY VALUES

When you are torn two ways because several factors influence your decision, endeavor to determine which values should be given primary consideration. Don't let desires of minor interest make you blind to the matter that is of central importance.

Suppose you are about to purchase a new car. The problem might prove to be somewhat like this:

1. Should we buy a larger car so there will be plenty of room for the children?
2. Would it be better to get a smaller car which will give more miles for each gallon of gasoline?

Before you decide which desire should be given first place you will need to check your budget. See which car you can afford without dipping into funds you have set aside for a vacation, or for the children's education. (If your income is large, the comfort provided by additional space will become the primary value.) Once the issues are clearly before you, allow no high-pressure

salesmanship to warp your judgment. Let your decision be determined by facts, not by feelings, or by the opinions of others.

Of course FACTS are not always tangible. When a new position is under consideration, the associates whom you will have and the opportunity for advancement should probably take precedence over the location of the office or territory. When a student is selecting a college, surely the courses that are offered, and the academic standing of the faculty, should be placed above the attractiveness of the campus. Never let obvious advantages outweigh lasting values.

The decision before you may involve personal matters, or it may be a public question on which you are going to vote. In either case, seek all the information available. Arrange the facts logically, according to their relative significance. Your skill in making right decisions will depend in large measure upon your ability to separate primary considerations from those that are of secondary worth.

One of the marks of maturity is logical thinking. When you have a decision of importance to make, first separate the major issue from the entangling details and emotions that surround it. Then arrange the facts that are relevant in their proper sequence. Clearly see the total picture. Weigh the values. Then you are ready to come to a wise conclusion.

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STRIVE TO GAIN PERSPECTIVE

Tragedies often result from decisions that were made to secure immediate gains rather than enduring values. Night after night a man faced the question: Should I work overtime, or should I go home to have dinner and the evening with my wife and family? He decided he needed money, so he worked overtime. As an indirect result his marriage was broken, and his son was in difficulties. In order to secure additional income he had sacrificed something more precious than dollars.

The unhappiness that results from unfortunate choices is not always as glaring as this. If a woman crowds so many activities into her schedule that she is exhausted when her husband and children arrive home, she has frequently said "yes" when she should have said "no". If a young person "burns the candle at both ends," and undermines his health, it is evident that he needs to limit his social obligations.

Many decisions involve the use of time. You ask yourself:

- * Should I keep at my work, or take time for recreation?
- * Should I go to the club, or call on a sick friend?
- * Should I do some gardening, or write a letter?

The choice you make in any situation may seem unworthy of second thought, but the pattern of your life is determined not so much by crucial issues as by the things that you do day by day.

Strive to develop the long-range point of view. See the person whom you want to be. Ask yourself how you may use your time and talents in order to bring the most enduring satisfactions. As you do this many decisions will be made spontaneously that otherwise would have required considerable effort.

This applies, also, to decisions that affect your personal habits. Ask yourself these questions:

- * Should I bother with diet or exercise, or skip it for today?
- * Should I follow the doctor's orders, or do what I like?
- * Should I give up habits that are injurious to my health, or be sociable with the crowd?

Your answers will be influenced by your entire philosophy of life. Strive to see those factors that are of lasting importance. As you gain perspective the temptation to self-indulgence will have less influence on your conduct. The desire to do those things that strengthen your body and enrich your mind will increase year by year.

A talented member of a community club was nominated for a national office of his organization. This forced him to make a difficult decision. He asked himself: "Would my business suffer because of the travel required? Is it fair to curtail our family vacation because of the time I must be away at conventions? Would new experiences and prestige justify the time and effort I would have to give? Are there intangible values to be gained from serving as president of this organization?

At first the advantages and disadvantages seemed so evenly balanced that a decision was not easy. When the man saw values not in terms of a single year, but in relation to life-long satisfactions, he knew the answer he must give.

Perspective will help you, also, to make important decisions wisely. Never allow immediate gains to take precedence over enduring satisfactions.

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BE CONSISTENT

Having set your standards high, consistently make those choices that will help you attain your goal. Don't make yourself miserable day after day by trying to be both noble and self-indulgent. Keep ever before you that which you feel to be your ultimate purpose in life. Then your choices - both major and minor - will require far less time and effort. Constantly endeavor to avoid inconsistency in making decisions.

Psychologists have pictured the tragic results that follow an attempt to be two persons, with two different standards of right and wrong. This literally tears us apart. In extreme cases it causes schizophrenia. Even in a mild form it contributes to frustration and to nervous disorders.

In "Drums Along the Mohawk" the author gives a dramatic picture of the conflict in the mind of Benedict Arnold. As an outstanding leader in the Continental Army he demonstrated extraordinary skill in military tactics. But he was torn by a desire for personal power. He wanted to protect the settlers in the Mohawk Valley against the depredations of Indian attack, but he coveted also the good will of the British. He vacillated back and forth between firmness and hesitancy. When settlements were attacked and destroyed he excused his failures by charging his superiors with neglect to provide resources. His lack of decisiveness laid the foundation for his traitorous conduct which was to come later.

Decide what kind of a person you want to be and the kind of a life you want to live. Then let your day-by-day decisions be in line with your life purposes. Form the habit of doing this consistently. Then many of your choices will be spontaneous.

Consistency is important in business relationships as well as in personal conduct. Recently I shared the heart-break of a family that had suffered financial reverses because the wage-earner, after achieving success as a salesman, became unreliable. He allowed desires for pleasure to interfere with appointments with his clients. When they learned that his word could not be depended upon, people naturally went elsewhere for service. Failure to be consistent in his business policy brought disaster.

American finance is based upon trust. The keystone is the belief that we can depend upon a man's promise. We like to purchase goods that have seals of approval, indicating quality, for we believe that the manufacturer who decided to make only fine quality products last year will hold to the same principles this year. If he changes his policy, his good name is lost. Even if he again makes a high grade product, his market will have suffered. Good business requires decisions that follow a steady pattern.

Consistent decisions contribute to family stability. Children are confused when a parent is indulgent one day and strict the next day. One of the most pathetic teenagers I know is a girl whose mother is generous, almost to a fault. Usually she gives her daughter a great deal of freedom, and even anticipates her desires. Then - without warning - the mother becomes critical of her daughter, finding fault with everything she does, and interrupting to demand help when she and her friends are enjoying themselves. Naturally this confuses the girl, for she never knows what she is expected to do.

Of course boys and girls often make unreasonable demands. A parent has to expect that. But children feel greater security when they can rely upon father and mother to take a consistent stand on questions of right and wrong. Therefore:

1. Be consistent in decisions that affect your personal life.
2. Be consistent in your business policy and in your social habits.
3. Be consistent in decisions that shape the life of your family.

SEEK GOOD COUNSEL

Frequently a decision involves questions that are so complex you will find it is advisable to seek counsel. Then it is of utmost importance that you turn in the right direction. Sometimes members of your family are too emotionally involved to help you to see what is best. Well-intentioned friends may give you the kind of advice they think you want to hear, instead of offering an honest appraisal of the issues.

Your problem may be of such a nature that it is essential for you to discuss it with someone who will never betray your confidence. Gossip, or widespread discussion of your dilemma, would harm you and your family. So select a counselor who will listen patiently and who will never repeat what you say.

Select a person whose personal life is steady and calm, and one whose ideals and purposes are in keeping with your own. Some relative or friend may meet these qualifications. Your teacher, or pastor (or priest or rabbi) is often the one who can best assist you in making an important decision.

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ACCEPT GOD'S GUIDANCE

Whatever earthly counsel you seek, do not neglect the guidance that can come through prayer. When a decision must be made, prayer is of inestimable value in leading you to the right conclusion.

Often we are so preoccupied with petty things that concern only ourselves and our families that our vision is limited. Sometimes we are so confused by the conflicting advice of well intentioned friends that we are unable to see which direction we should take. Then it is wise to go apart and seek divine insight upon the problem.

As was suggested earlier, try to see every issue in its proper proportion. Never hide behind a wall of self-deception. You will find that your vision increases as you spend time in meditation and prayer. Such periods will enable you to decide what is ultimately for the best.

If prayer does not throw new light upon your problems, and help you to decide which course to take, it may be because you have failed to learn how really to pray. Don't be content with the simple prayer you used when you were a small child. One should advance in the school of prayer as he does in any other field of knowledge which he desires to master. This comes with study and practice.

If you would claim more of the guidance your Heavenly Father so freely gives, it is important for you to have conversation with Him every day. Establish the same close relationship a child has with a parent. Then when you seek for God's wisdom your finite mind will be in tune with the Infinite Mind and you will be able to hear God's directions.

A college senior was offered two different positions, both of which were attractive. He said to me, "Do you really believe God is interested in my personal problem? Have I the right to ask the Almighty to tell me which opening to choose?"

First I cautioned him against mental laziness and reminded him that God had given him intelligence and expected him to use it. I encouraged him to seek to fully understand the demands and the opportunities of each position, and to balance them with his qualifications. Then I helped him to formulate a prayer for guidance. It was like this:

"Dear Lord, I thank Thee for all Thy gifts - for blessings far beyond what I deserve. I want to use all my talents. Show me where I can be of greatest service. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Perhaps I should tell you that the young man did not receive an immediate answer to his prayer. But after several days of searching, he knew the decision he should make.

This experience, Beloved Perfector, can be yours. Whatever your problem, lift it up to the Eternal Light. First evaluate intelligently all the assets and liabilities. Then ask for wisdom to make up the balance sheet.

Daily, keep your mind open to the Eternal. This attitude of prayerful listening is just as important as any words you say. It will help you to receive God's guidance when you must make important decisions.



SUMMARY

Major decisions help to clarify your thinking and to set your feet upon the path you will take throughout your life. Let them never be made carelessly, or erratically.

First, endeavor to approach your problem without inner tension. Take time to be still.

Separate the major issues from those that are of minor importance.

Strive to gain perspective. See your problem in the light of next year; or relate it to your total life purpose. Don't give way to expediency. Let eternal values outweigh short-term assets.

Be consistent. Then many decisions can be made quickly.

When confused, seek wise counsel. If the burden of decision seems great, let an understanding friend share your load.

Keep in tune with the Infinite. Through daily prayer learn how to ask for divine guidance and how to receive it. Then many responses will be intuitive and others can be made quickly. In each case there will be less chance of mistaken judgment. Remember that God is trying to help you find the right answers.



AFFIRMATION

With God's help I can promptly separate the wrong from the right, and the good from the best. I will not waste time and energy by indecision.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.